

GET PRACTICAL...

with Deputy Editor Rachel Stothert



Now is the time that we start emerging from our winter cocoons. There's no guarantee that the weather's going to be any better over the next few months but that occasional spell of sunshine invites you to get out and about in your 'van a bit more.

Maybe now the days are getting longer, it has urged you to get back into your garage and finish that DIY job that may have been stalled over the winter months. If so, then have a look at the second part of a VW conversion project on page 203 to learn a bit more about the final stages of a DIY van conversion.

It might inspire you to do your own, or at least give some ideas for simple upgrades.

Were you away over the winter and had issues with power for all the lights, TV watching and heating requirements (most gas-powered heaters need a little electric spark to operate)? Is it time to look at your battery power? Then read page 213 where we take a look at how to maximise your motorhome's 12-volt potential.

And do you have niggles or faults that you just can't fix or find a solution for? Then turn to the Interchange pages (227-235), which are full of motorhoming problems and suggestions from our experts and readers on how to solve them.

Finally, if you're planning to head abroad for a longer jaunt, be it summer or winter, check the small print on your preferred channel crossing company. Some companies restrict the amount of gas you can carry.

Rachel Stothert

TOO MUCH GAS

A reader recently sent a letter to the team, stating that he'd been stopped before getting on a ferry for his annual Continental jaunt. After checking the gas, it was found that the motorhomer was carrying more than the amount allowed and he had to leave a full bottle at the port to be able to travel.

The price of gas and the price of cylinders means this can be expensive, especially as you may have to buy more gas on the other side of the Channel. It's worth noting that a lot of European 'vans have space for two 13kg cylinders while some of the ferry companies do not allow this much in an individual vehicle.

Here's what some of the leading operators tell us:

P&O

On its Dover-Calais and Hull-Zeebrugge/ Rotterdam services, gas with a weight of up to 47kg (excluding the weight of the gas receptacle) may be carried. On the Irish Sea routes, up to three gas cylinders of no more than 11.2kg each may be carried.



All cylinders must be adequately secured against movement of the ship with the supply shut off at the cylinders during the voyage. Leaking and inadequately secured or connected cylinders will be refused shipment. Any gas cylinders to be carried must be declared at the time of booking. Partially full or empty cylinders will be treated as if they are full.

Any vehicle carrying more than three gas cylinders is classed as hazardous and would therefore have to be booked as freight. Vehicles with fixed gas tanks are accepted on our services, but drivers must isolate the gas supply when the vehicle is left on the car deck during the voyage.

DFDS

Newcastle-Amsterdam & Harwich-Esbjerg

There is a maximum of 2 x 11kg gas bottles disconnected and turned off and only one purpose-made petrol can per motor vehicle max of five gallons (23 litres).

Dover-Dunkirk

The maximum gas allowed is three bottles of 15kg per bottle. So, 45kg in total.

EUROTUNNEL

If travelling with a campervan, caravan or van, any gas container must be declared when asked and will be checked at the appropriate checkpoint.

If your vehicle is fitted with a 'mobile' gas container, the quantity of gas is limited to 47kg (approximately 93 litres) for a single container and is limited to 50kg (or approximately 99 litres) in the case of several containers.

If your vehicle is fitted with a 'fixed' gas container, the quantity of gas is limited to 47kg (approximately 93 litres) for a single container and the maximum filling rate is 80 per cent (approximately 73 litres).

In the case of several fixed containers the quantity of gas is limited to 50kg

(approximately 99 litres) on the whole with a maximum filling rate of 80 per cent per container (approximately 79 litres).

If your vehicle is fitted with a combination of mobile and fixed containers, the quantity of gas is limited to 50kg and rules previously described apply.

Containers must be easy to access by staff to carry out any checks. This filling rate will be checked via the gauge. If no gauge is present, the vehicle will be refused.

When travelling, gas containers must be switched off and connection systems must be in good condition.

BRITANNY FERRIES

When travelling in a motorhome, a maximum of three 15kg gas cylinders or 47kg of LPG excluding the weight of the tank may be carried. All cylinders should be adequately secured against the movement of the ship. The ignition should be switched off. The gas supply needs to be shut off at the cylinders/tank whilst the vehicle is on the ship. Only properly piped and fitted cylinders/tank are permitted and must be properly secured away from sources of heat and ignition.

LD LINES

LD Lines' ferries do accept gas bottles in motorhomes as long as they are part of the original equipment of the vehicle, so extra bottles are not allowed to be carried.

So, what does this all mean? It varies from company to company and between different routes, so double check before you book, and then check the terms and conditions of your booking as well. It seems that those carrying spare bottles for an extended trip may need to be aware of the restrictions.

If you are booking through an intermediary, ask them to clarify the situation before you book your crossing. ■